

2017 Delaware Century Farm families recognized

Media: Hi-resolution photographs are available on [Flickr](#).

Dover, Del. – Six Delaware families which have owned their farms for at least 100 years were honored as Century Farms on Thursday.

“Today we are recognizing farm families that have made a commitment for 100 years or more to keep their land in agriculture for future generations,” said Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse. “It’s in the true spirit of farm families who weather the ups and downs of farming that Delaware agriculture is able to remain strong.”



Delaware Century Farm families received a sign for their farms, an engraved plate, and legislative tributes.

The six families recognized Thursday at the Delaware Department of Agriculture were:

- The Merriken family (Mrs. Leslie Smith Merriken and nephew John W. Merriken), which owns a 404-acre family farm located in Harrington. Solomon Layton Sapp of Harrington purchased 292 acres in 1916 and an adjacent

tract of 112 acres in 1917 which is now known as the "California Farm." The cost of this acreage 100 years ago was \$4,405. Over the last 100 years, the California Farm has yielded wheat, corn, soybeans, loblolly pines, and oaks. In the mid 1980's Calvert Merriken, Jr. transformed 260 acres of forestland into a working pine plantation. Today it is a model for conservation practices to promote wildlife enhancement, clean air, water and recreational opportunities. The farm generates income through grain crops, timber sales, and hunting leases with an emphasis on quality deer management.

- The Mitchell family (Mrs. Luray Mitchell McClung), own Fox Chase Farms in Millsboro. In January 1917, Mrs. McClung's grandfather, Mr. Lorenzo Burton Mitchell, completed the purchase of the farm's original 99 acres. An additional 110 acres were added in 1932. The family grew blackberries and made holly wreathes during the 1930's and 1940's and raised poultry. Today, the primary crops are corn and soybeans.
- The Ross family (Mrs. Alice T. Ross and son Charles B. Ross, Jr.) started with 72 acres in Clayton, purchased by Mr. George Ross in 1915. In 1960, the farm passed onto George's son, Charles B. Ross, Sr. had grown to 185 acres. Charles Sr. and his son, Charles Jr. continued to work the farm together, which included a dairy farm until 1973. Alice Ross worked alongside her husband and son in the fields, often running the tractor and hay baler. Over the years the farm has yielded corn, wheat, barley, soybeans, alfalfa and clover hay. Christmas trees were just added this year.
- The Smith family (David and Dorothy Smith, Donna Smith-Moore and Alan Moore, and Margie Lee O'Day) has been farming in Bridgeville for nearly 200 years. In May 1821, Mr. David Smith purchased 300 acres at a Sheriff's sale for \$476 – only \$1.59 per acre. Through the years, the land has changed hands in the family and they currently farm 55 acres yielding corn, soybeans, trees,

poultry and livestock, and various other vegetables. David and Dorothy have passed the majority of the land down to their daughter, Donna Smith-Moore and son-in-law Alan Moore to keep the land in agriculture.

- The Webb family (Mrs. Helen Mae Webb) own a 72-acre farm in Frederica, adjacent to Route 1. In July 1916, Liston H. Webb, Sr. of Milford Neck purchased 85 acres. In 1930, Liston Sr. and his wife Eva opened a roadside produce market, now known as L.H. Webb's Market. The Webb's had five sons: Liston, Jr., Jackson, Charles, James, and Samuel. In 1952, their son Samuel and his wife Helen Mae purchased the farm and roadside stand. Over the years the farm has produced potatoes, soybeans, corn, grapes and peaches. Helen Mae's grandson Kyle still tills the land today.
- The Wilkins family (Wayne and Doris Wilkins) 80-acre farm in Georgetown was purchased in 1913 by Wayne's great-uncle, Mr. Asher B. Wilkins. In 1981, the farm was officially passed down to Wayne and Doris. Over the years the farm has produced timber, corn, soybeans, poultry, and livestock.

Legislative tributes were also presented from local state legislators.

Century Farms must have been farmed by the same family for at least 100 years and must include at least 10 acres of the original parcel or gross more than \$10,000 annually in agricultural sales. The Century Farm Awards have been presented annually since 1987 with 139 farms now recognized.

###

Media Contact: Stacey Hofmann, Chief of Community Relations,
(302) 698-4542, stacey.hofmann@delaware.gov